

Amendments to the Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) gene, wherein said siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 21 base pairs, and wherein each strand of said siNA molecule comprises one or more chemical modifications.

Claim 2 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 1, wherein said siNA molecule comprises no ribonucleotides.

Claim 3 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 1, wherein said siNA molecule comprises ribonucleotides.

Claim 4 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 1, wherein one of the strands of said double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of a VEGF gene or a portion thereof, and wherein the second strand of said double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence substantially similar to the nucleotide sequence of said VEGF gene or a portion thereof.

Claim 5 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 4, wherein each said strand of the siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 23 nucleotides, and wherein each said strand comprises at least about 19 nucleotides that are complementary to the nucleotides of the other strand.

Claim 6 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 1, wherein said siNA molecule comprises an antisense region comprising a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of a VEGF gene or a portion thereof, and wherein said siNA further comprises a sense region,

wherein said sense region comprises a nucleotide sequence substantially similar to the nucleotide sequence of said VEGF gene or a portion thereof.

Claim 7 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein said antisense region and said sense region each comprise about 19 to about 23 nucleotides, and wherein said antisense region comprises at least about 19 nucleotides that are complementary to nucleotides of the sense region.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The siNA molecule of claim 1, wherein said siNA molecule comprises a sense region and an antisense region and wherein said antisense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of RNA encoded by a VEGF gene, or a portion thereof and said sense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to said antisense region.

Claim 9 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein said siNA molecule is assembled from two separate oligonucleotide fragments wherein one fragment comprises the sense region and the second fragment comprises the antisense region of said siNA molecule.

Claim 10 (original): The siNA molecule of claim claim 6, wherein said sense region is connected to the antisense region via a linker molecule.

Claim 11 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 10, wherein said linker molecule is a polynucleotide linker.

Claim 12 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 10, wherein said linker molecule is a non-nucleotide linker.

- Claim 13 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein pyrimidine nucleotides in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl pyrimidine nucleotides.
- Claim 14 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein purine nucleotides in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides.
- Claim 15 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides.
- Claim 16 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 9, wherein the fragment comprising said sense region includes a terminal cap moiety at the 5'-end, the 3'-end, or both of the 5' and 3' ends of the fragment comprising said sense region.
- Claim 17 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 16, wherein said terminal cap moiety is an inverted deoxy abasic moiety.
- Claim 18 (currently amended): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein the pyrimidine nucleotides of said antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides.
- Claim 19 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein the purine nucleotides of said antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides.
- Claim 20 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein the purine nucleotides present in said antisense region comprise 2'-deoxy- purine nucleotides.
- Claim 21 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 18, wherein said antisense region comprises a phosphorothioate internucleotide linkage at the 3' end of said antisense region.

- Claim 22 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 6, wherein said antisense region comprises a glyceryl modification at the 3' end of said antisense region.
- Claim 23 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 9, wherein each of the two fragments of said siNA molecule comprise 21 nucleotides.
- Claim 24 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 23, wherein about 19 nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule and wherein at least two 3' terminal nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are not base-paired to the nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule.
- Claim 25 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 24, wherein each of the two 3' terminal nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are 2'-deoxy-pyrimidines.
- Claim 26 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 25, wherein said 2'-deoxy-pyrimidine is 2'-deoxy-thymidine.
- Claim 27 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 23, wherein all 21 nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule.
- Claim 28 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 23, wherein about 19 nucleotides of the antisense region are base-paired to the nucleotide sequence of the RNA encoded by a VEGF gene or a portion thereof.
- Claim 29 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 23, wherein 21 nucleotides of the antisense region are base-paired to the nucleotide

sequence of the RNA encoded by a VEGF gene or a portion thereof.

Claim 30 (original): The siNA molecule of claim 9, wherein the 5'-end of the fragment comprising said antisense region optionally includes a phosphate group.

Claims 31-36 (canceled)